DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 074 CE 047 913

TITLE Resourcing Adult Literacy and Basic Skills.
INSTITUTION Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, London (England).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-906509-82-3
PUB DATE Jan 87
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Developed Nations; Educational Development; *Educational Planning; Foreign Countries; *Literacy Education; Program Development; *Program Implementation
IDENTIFIERS Great Britain

ABSTRACT

This discussion document provides detailed guidance on the resources needed to provide high quality learning opportunities for adults who want to improve basic communication skills. Background material is provided on the size of the literacy problem, the response of educators, the level of resources allocated for adult literacy and basic skills, and the determination of necessary resources. The need for a plan of development in every local education authority is emphasized. Other topics addressed include staffing, adult literacy and basic skills provision, learning materials, staff development and training, publicity and recruitment, and the development of learning opportunities provision. An appendix summarizes a discussion document entitled "Organising Provision: Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills." (YLB)

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Resourcing Adult Literacy and Basic Skills

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ALBSU
Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

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Advisory Group

"Resourcing Adult Literacy and Basic Skills" was produced with the help of a small Advisory Group convened by ALBSU.

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This Discussion Document was also piloted extensively before publication.

Foreword

In April 1983 ALBSU published a Discussion Document on Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills. This Document – launched at the Unit's Annual Conference in May 1983 – provided a focus for continuing discussion and debate about good practice, and was considered at regional seminars organised and mounted by ALBSU in 1983 and 1984.

It was not intended that the Document should be a definitive or prescriptive statement, but rather, that it should give some guidance on good practice in organising adult literacy and basic skills provision using the experience gained in almost a decade since the original adult literacy campaign. Although not everyone agreed with all of it, a significant number of elected members, officers and practitioners supported its general approach. Moreover, it has played an important part in encouraging LEAs to review their provision over the last few years.

Discussion at the Unit's seminars and elsewhere, indicated that there was a need for more detailed guidance on particular aspects of adult literacy and basic skills provision to complement the general points made within the Document.

"*Resourcing Adult Literacy and Basic Skills*" is an attempt to provide more detailed guidance on the resources needed to provide high quality learning opportunities for adults who want to improve basic communication skills. Clearly it reflects the view from the "centre" and the guidance contained in the Document will need to be adapted and modified to take account of local circumstances. Moreover, ALBSU recognises that the level of resources suggested is a target that will, necessarily, need to be achieved over a number of years rather than immediately. Like the Good Practice Document itself, we hope that it will stimulate discussion and debate amongst elected members, officers, practitioners, students and volunteers.

Finally, "*Resourcing Adult Literacy and Basic Skills*" relates particularly to adult literacy and numeracy work provided by local education authorities as part of the adult education service, whether college or adult or community centre based. Whilst it may have relevance for other providers including those working in voluntary organisations or involved in English as a second language work, this is not its primary intention.

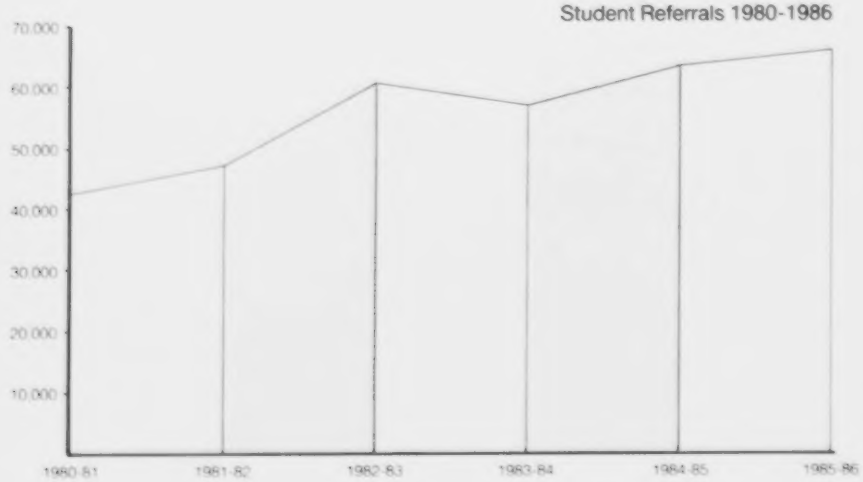
Kenneth Brooksbank
Chairman, Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit

Resourcing Adult Literacy and Basic Skills

1. The last decade of adult literacy and basic skills provision on a significant scale has illustrated the need to make available, for the foreseeable future, learning opportunities for adults who wish to improve their basic communication skills. Since 1975 over 500,000 adults have sought tuition and in the last year over 60,000 new students have sought help with adult literacy, numeracy and other related basic skills. Whilst this is one indication of need, all of the available evidence suggest that only a small proportion of those who have difficulties with basic skills are actually receiving tuition.

2. For example, 10% of those young adults interviewed as part of the National Child Development Study in 1981 said that they had experienced literacy problems since leaving school and a further 5% admitted problems with basic maths. Yet under 10% of those who had literacy problems had received any tuition and, of those with difficulties with basic maths, an even smaller percentage had been involved in basic education.

3. The response of the education service during the last ten years has been considerable. Each of the 104 Local Education Authorities has established adult literacy and basic skills tuition in its area and this is com-



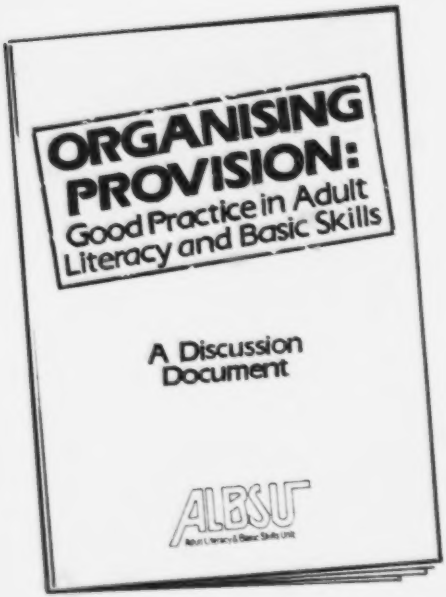
plemented by the provision made by voluntary organisations and other bodies. Moreover, development has taken place in recent years in order to ensure that provision is flexible, student centred and of high quality. However, the establishment of provision and its development has taken place in an extremely difficult economic climate and, considerable disparity of provision still exists from area to area.

4. The level of resources allocated for adult literacy and basic skills provision varies significantly from LEA to LEA. In some areas provision is based on full and substantial part-time paid co-ordinating and organising staff, a variety of learning opportunities, specific materials and training budgets and free tuition. In others, however, relatively few part-time paid staff and volunteers are attempting to improve often poor quality and limited learning opportunities. Whilst there is not necessarily an exact correlation between the level of resources and the quality of provision, the Unit's experience indicates that a close connection does exist between the level of resources and the quality of tuition received by students.

5. The Unit believes that an attempt to determine the resources necessary for adult literacy and basic skills provision is essential if the service is to be adequately developed. Thus, we have tried to outline the minimum standards of provision we believe any student should be able to expect as part of an effective service. By outlining minimum standards we are not suggesting that it is satisfactory to accept the minimum. Rather we are attempting to establish a minimum level which can be extended and developed in the years to come. Clearly, it is not easy to estimate the level of resources necessary to ensure that a good quality adult literacy and basic skills service is available in each locality and any guidance must be subject to adaptation and modification, bearing in mind the differing needs of different areas. Moreover, we acknowledge that a period of time, perhaps five years, will be needed for many LEAs to meet the minimum level outlined below as part of a Development Plan for basic education.

6. In calculating the level of funding, the Unit has taken into account the recommendations of the original Good Practice Document, the major recommendations of which are included as an appendix, as well as the views of a number of individuals who have been involved in the provision and development of adult literacy and basic skills at a variety of levels from throughout England and Wales.

7. *"Resourcing Adult Literacy and Basic Skills"* concentrates on the resources which are usually provided from within an authority's normal education budget and, thus, does not include provision financed from other sources including central government. We acknowledge, however,



that a number of LEAs do look to alternative sources of funding for financing specific parts of their provision or for development. We have not, however, included learning opportunities funded by the Manpower Services Commission, Urban Aid, Section 11 or the Inner City Programme. Nor have we included funds made available from central or local sources for specific developmental aspects of provision, including those made available by ALBSU itself. Finally, whilst we are aware that some LEAs are also involved in funding and supporting voluntary organisations involved in basic education, we have not attempted to address this specific area of resourcing in this Discussion Document.

Planning Provision

8. Much of the response to the basic education needs of adults in the last decade has been necessarily ad-hoc and unplanned. LEAs had to respond urgently to a major identified need with immediate action often taking precedence over more considered planning. Moreover, the difficult economic climate of the last few years and the constraint this has placed on LEAs has meant that, in many LEA areas, little has been possible other than the maintenance, and some modest development, of the provision established in the mid-1970's. Thus, structures are sometimes inappropriate and the resourcing level of adult literacy and basic skills is usually inadequate to meet existing and newly emerging needs.

9. The Unit's original Good Practice Discussion Document pointed to the need for a Plan of Development for adult literacy and basic skills in every LEA and we would reiterate that we see such a Plan as the key to the development of high quality provision.

Some points worth consideration are:

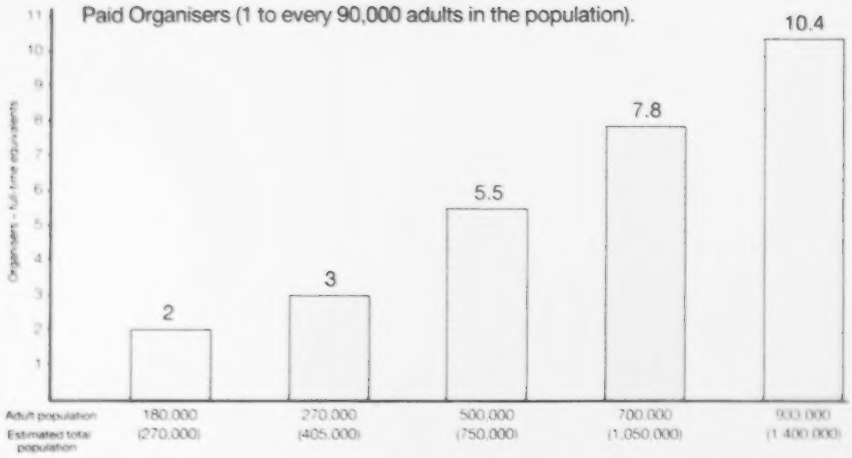
a) A number of authorities have found it useful to establish a development group to formulate a Plan of Development drawn from the range of individuals and organisations within the LEA's area. Membership could include elected members, officers, practitioners, volunteers and students as well as representatives drawn from the library service, probation service, social services and employment services.

b) Development Plans need to be prepared for a three to five year period and need to have clearly specified phases and stages. However, such plans should not be regarded as a once and for all statement but, rather, be seen as part of a rolling programme of planning, including the identification of needs and action to meet them.

c) Such a Development Plan should include some description of the parameters of basic education work with adults within the authority, the basic framework of provision, illustrations of good practice and an indication of the resources necessary to maintain and develop high quality provision.

Staffing

10. The quality of adult literacy and basic skills provision depends to a large extent on the level of organising and co-ordinating staffing in each area of England and Wales. Specialist support and guidance is a key element of basic education provision and part-time teaching staff and volunteers need considerable support if they are to be effective. Intensive imaginative publicity, including outreach work, student guidance and counselling and liaison with other agencies are all time consuming tasks and account needs to be taken of these, and other essential elements of co-ordinator's and organiser's jobs, when assessing the level of staffing needed to provide a good quality service. In the original Good Practice Document the Unit estimated that a ratio of one full-time organiser or equivalent part-time staff to every 70,000 to 90,000 adults in an LEA's area is the minimum appropriate for staffing levels in adult literacy and basic skills work with adults and



we would reiterate that this seems an appropriate minimum figure. Other points that are worth bearing in mind are:

a) Specialist staff responsible for the co-ordination of an authority's adult literacy and basic skills provision, including its development, (County or Borough Co-ordinators) need to be graded at an appropriate level. Thus LEAs should consider establishing such Co-ordinators on Burnham Senior Lecturer, Principal Lecturer or Head of Department Scales or some other equivalent scale bearing in mind the size of the LEA and the level of responsibility of the post.

b) The Conditions of Service for authority Co-ordinators should be similar to those for other adult education staff who are primarily concerned with co-ordinating provision.

c) Organising staff at a local level (i.e. those directly responsible for organising provision including placement of students and tutors) should similarly be appointed at an appropriate grade. In our view such staff should be graded at Burnham Lecturer II (or Senior Lecturer where the size of the Authority and responsibility is considerable), or equivalent and should be employed on similar conditions of service to other adult education service staff with similar, albeit more general, organisational responsibilities. (In some smaller LEAs the roles of Borough Co-ordinator and Organiser are likely to be combined in a single post).

d) Part-time organising staff should be appointed for at least 12 hours per week and as far as possible should be employed on fractional appointments or as Associate Lecturers.

e) Staffing levels should be determined to ensure that a year round service is available. Whilst it may not be possible, or necessarily desirable, to make provision for 52 weeks of the year, the Unit believes that learning opportunities should be available for at least 46 weeks per year and that adequate levels of co-ordinating, organising, teaching and secretarial staff should be available to ensure that such provision is available.

f) The nature of basic education provision makes it essential that clerical and secretarial support is available. Each full-time local authority Co-ordinator needs the equivalent of a full-time secretary in order to ensure that appropriate support is available to professional staff. Similarly a full-time Organiser needs at least the equivalent of a full-time secretary, particularly as student contact, record keeping and the production of material is so crucial a part of adult literacy and basic skills provision.

g) Part-time organising and teaching staff should be able to claim essential expenses needed to undertake their role, (excluding travel from home to work) including telephone calls, travel expenses incurred through home or centre visits and other sundry expenses.

h) Volunteers should not be out of pocket as a result of their involvement in basic education. Thus, volunteers should be able to claim expenses incurred in carrying out their duties.

Provision

11. Adult literacy and basic skills provision consists largely of part-time learning opportunities for students either in small groups or through individual tuition in a centre or at home. Often such opportunities are available only during adult education terms and in some places this means that for between a half and one-third of the year, learning opportunities are unavailable. Moreover, current provision only provides for a small percentage of the estimated 10% of the adult population in need. Quantifying existing provision, as well as what needs to become available in the new few years is a daunting task, fraught with difficulties. However, the Unit believes that more learning opportunities need to be made available and would encourage LEAs to include this aspect of the development of provision in Development Plans. The following points are worthy of consideration:

a) Adult literacy and basic skills provision should be financed from a specific and identifiable budget rather than from a unspecified sum drawn from a wider adult and further education budget.

b) It is currently estimated that the majority of adult literacy and basic skills students receive only 1-2 hours of tuition a week often for no more than 30-36 weeks of the year. The Unit believes that adult literacy and basic skills students should, on average, be able to take advantage of at least 4 hours of tuition per week for 46 weeks of the year and that this should be established as the minimum level of provision in every area. Clearly, some students may not wish to take advantage of this level of tuition, whilst others particularly non-employed or unemployed adults, will want to receive more including intensive courses.

c) It is, the Unit believes, important for each LEA to establish, perhaps as part of a Development Plan, a target number of adults to be provided for by adult literacy and basic skills provision. Clearly not all adults are motivated to improve their skills; moreoever, present provision would be unable to cope, in many areas, if even a small percentage were to seek help. However, it should be possible to determine the level of provision necessary to provide for say 5% of the estimated need in a particular LEA area.

Materials

12. Access to a wide range of learning materials is essential if a high quality service is to be available. Adults learn most effectively if the material they use is closely related to their needs and interests and this is particularly true of adult literacy and basic skills students. Variety and range are essential rather than a set of primers, and there needs to be regular purchase of new materials. Moreover, much material including computer hardware and programs, learning packages and kits are fairly expensive and resources need to be allocated with this in mind. The following points are also important:

a) Alongside a wide range of learning material each LEA needs resources centres where material can be displayed and loaned. Such centres need to be accessible to tutors and students and it is an advantage if some teaching accommodation is also available in the centre. In some authorities it may be possible to develop basic education resource centres as part of other wider resource centres within the LEA area.

b) Each LEA needs to have an identified budget for the purchase of teaching and learning materials in adult literacy and basic skills. The budget should be calculated to include the purchase of new commercially produced material, as well as the production of materials locally including newsletters and magazines.

c) The Unit estimates that materials budgets in adult literacy and basic skills need to be calculated on the basis of approximately £7-10 per annum, per student receiving tuition.

Staff Development and Training

13. Adult literacy and basic skills is an area in which much of the teaching is undertaken by part-time staff and volunteers and, thus, staff development and training are crucial. Opportunities need to be provided at both initial and in-service levels and staff and volunteers involved need to be committed to improving their knowledge and skills through such opportunities. It is important that training should be available free of charge and that, as far as possible, such opportunities should be available for paid staff as part of their normal duties and are provided during work time. Volunteers should not be at a financial disadvantage through attending training sessions and courses. The following points are worth bearing in mind:

a) Staff and volunteers involved in adult literacy and basic skills work should be committed to take part in in-service training and other staff development activities in order to update their knowledge and improve their skills. Moreover, the Unit believes that staff contracts could usefully include a commitment by staff to attend a specified minimum of training and staff development, and a commitment by LEAs to provide a specified amount of training and staff development opportunities for the member of staff concerned.

b) Full-time paid staff should be entitled to at least 30 hours of in-service training and staff development per year, provided by the LEA although it is acknowledged that not all such staff will take advantage of this level of opportunity.

c) Part-time paid organising and teaching staff should be entitled to in-service training and staff development on a pro-rata basis with an agreed minimum of at least 16 hours per annum provided by the LEA.

d) Alongside formal courses and training events, LEAs need to encourage other less formal training and staff development activities including curriculum development groups, etc.

e) Training for other agency staff such as librarians, probation officers, etc., with an interest in basic education, also needs to be made available by LEAs.

f) Experience indicates that initial training for volunteers should be of at least 16 hours duration and it is essential that all volunteers, whether trained teachers or not, should undertake initial training. Volunteers should also be able to take advantage of at least 12 hours in-service training a year provided by the LEA.

g) Although it is difficult to quantify accurately the resources needed for staff development and training, the Unit believes that an element equal to approximately 5% of the recommended staff and provision budget for adult literacy and basic skills provision, detailed above, should be specifically allocated for initial and in-service training and staff development. The Department of Education and Science's INSET arrangements may be particularly important in this context.

Publicity and Recruitment

14. Publicity is the key to student recruitment in adult literacy and basic skills work. Experience indicates that without imaginative and continuous publicity many potential students remain in ignorance of the opportunities which exist. Publicity also informs the general public and key decision makers about basic education needs and provision. It needs to be varied, of high quality and should include a strong element of outreach work. Although publicity can motivate potential students and help them to

seek help, unless ease of access is assured many will be deterred by the barriers which often exist. These include administrative and bureaucratic hurdles as well as poorly housed tuition, high fees, lack of access for disabled students and provision based solely on adult education academic terms. Other points worth considering are:

a) Although much publicity for basic education is subsumed in an LEA's general budget for publicity, an identified budget is needed to ensure that effective and continuous publicity is a key element of provision. Such a budget needs to take account of design of posters, printing, distribution and outreach initiatives, although some of these costs may be provided in kind centrally or, for instance, through local colleges.

b) The Unit estimates that a figure equal to approximately 2% of the staff and provision budget for adult literacy and basic skills, detailed above, needs to be allocated for publicity.

c) The Unit believes that literacy, numeracy and other basic communication skills tuition should be available free of charge to individual students irrespective of their means. However, ALBSU also takes the view that any subsidy should be provided by the LEA in general, rather than through the fee income raised from other adult education classes and activities. Clearly, this needs to be taken account of in net budgetting or target fee income systems.

d) Access for adults with disabilities (including those with sight and hearing disabilities) should be seen as a high priority in locating adult literacy and basic skills provision. Whilst it may not be possible to ensure access to every location where tuition takes place, the Unit believes that LEAs should ensure that at least one centre providing adult literacy and basic skills tuition is accessible for disabled students.

e) Guidance and counselling are crucial both in advising students on the most suitable learning opportunities and in providing guidance about other adult and further education opportunities available in the LEA area. Account of this needs to be taken in devising job descriptions for full and part-time staff in adult literacy and basic skills.

Developing Provision

15 Establishing an adequately resourced framework for adult literacy and basic skills provision is only the first step in development. Currently, tuition is available for only a

small proportion of those adults who could benefit from learning opportunities. Moreover, in the main, tuition is essentially part-time and few opportunities exist for adults to study full-time or for a significant period every week.

16. Some potential students need new and innovatory approaches, such as distance and open learning rather than more traditional opportunities. Others need opportunities for accreditation or to move on to other continuing education opportunities. The Unit recognises that not all of these opportunities can be developed in every area in the immediate future, and that part of the reality of devising a Developoment Plan is that priorities will have to be established. However, the following points are worth considering:

a) A specific sum should be included in an authority's budget for adult literacy and basic skills for new developments. Clearly a different level of development is likely to be necessary in different years and, thus, the actual level of resources needed can best be determined locally.

b) Whilst the initial cost of development may be sought from a range of funding agencies, the Unit believes that maintaining the provision once it has been developed should be seen as an LEA's responsibility, and that resource levels need to be revised to take this into account.

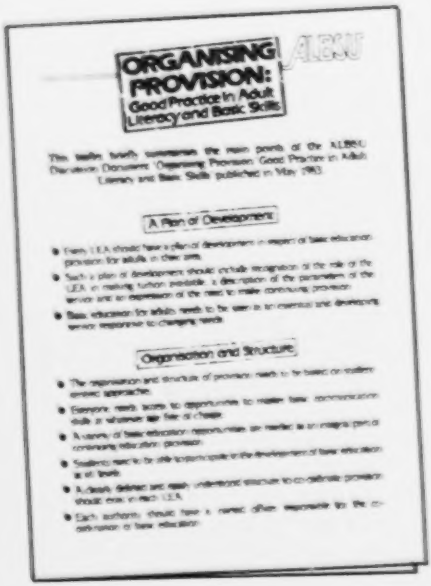
Conclusion

17. The adult literacy and basic skills service in most areas of England and Wales is a developing service, still very much involved in meeting identified and emerging needs. In many areas it was established quickly in response to national identification of the need for adult literacy provision and has been developed as and when resources have been available. However, after over ten years of provision it is an appropriate time to take stock, to establish adequate levels of resourcing and to consider further development.

18. Establishing adequate resourcing levels is, the Unit believes, the key to the provision of a high quality service for individual basic education students wherever they live, whatever their circumstances. We hope that this discussion document, based on experience to date, will contribute to that process.

Appendix

This leaflet briefly summarises the main points of the ALBSU Discussion Document 'Organising Provision: Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills' published in May 1983.


ORGANISING PROVISION: Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills

A Plan of Development

Organisation and Structure

A Plan of Development

- Every LEA should have a plan of development in respect of basic education provision for adults in its area.
- Such a plan of development should include recognition of the role of the LEA in making tuition available, a description of the parameters of the service and an expression of the need to make continuing provision.
- Basic education for adults needs to be seen as an essential and developing service responsive to changing needs.

Organisation and Structure

- The organisation and structure of provision needs to be based on student-centred approaches.
- Everyone needs access to opportunities to master basic communication skills at whatever age free of charge.
- A variety of basic education opportunities are needed as an integral part of continuing education provision.
- Students need to be able to participate in the development of basic education at all levels.
- A clearly defined and easily understood structure to co-ordinate provision should exist in each LEA.
- Each authority should have a named officer responsible for the co-ordination of basic education.

Resources

- Knowledge about the level of finance available for basic education provision should be available to organisers and co-ordinators before the beginning of each financial year.
- The nature of basic education provision means that adequate clerical and secretarial support is crucial.
- A permanent, accessible base, or bases, available throughout the day and year is essential.
- Access for tutors and students to a varied range of learning materials needs to be made as easy as possible.
- Resources for the production of material, including student writing, are particularly necessary.
- Paid part-time staff should be able to claim essential expenses incurred in the course of their work.
- Shared use of expensive capital equipment should be encouraged.

Staffing

- A minimum ratio of one full-time organiser or equivalent part-time staff to every 70,000-90,000 adults in an LEA's area is appropriate at this point in time for adult literacy and basic skills work.
- Each authority needs an adequate number of organising staff of sufficient status to reflect the importance of basic education.
- A clear career structure for basic education staff needs to be developed.
- The conditions of employment of basic education staff should be similar to those for other adult education staff with appropriate modifications to take account of the nature of the work.
- Organising and co-ordinating staff need to have their duties clearly defined.
- Part-time paid staff need a clear outline of their duties and should, as far as possible, be eligible for associate lecturer status.
- The teacher/student ratio in basic education groups should not exceed 1 paid teacher to 6/8 students although newly formed groups should initially be allowed to operate on lower ratios.
- While the involvement of volunteers in basic education is seen as essential they should not be considered a cheap alternative to paid staff.
- Support for volunteer tutors, including initial and in-service training, is particularly essential.
- A selection procedure for potential volunteers is of paramount importance.
- Volunteers should be able to claim travelling expenses at an appropriate rate.

Staff Development and Training

- Induction training for all basic edu-

cation staff is essential and should be provided free of charge.

- Training to teach basic skills to children should not be considered adequate in itself for teaching adults.
- Training opportunities for paid staff should be available as part of their duties.
- Inter-agency training is particularly desirable.
- Staff development should be seen as an integral part of provision.
- In addition to formal training, a support network for tutors needs to be established.

Publicity

- Publicising basic education provision should be seen as a continuing need.
- Each LEA needs to have a central referral telephone number or numbers for basic education.
- Publicity needs to have a variety of purposes including raising public awareness and recruitment of staff, volunteers and students.
- Regular contact with the media is likely to continue to be particularly productive.
- Outreach work needs to be encouraged alongside more conventional publicity.

Access

- Basic education provision for adults should be available throughout the year.
- Access to provision should be made as easy as possible for the potential student.
- Creche provision is often particularly helpful in encouraging parents with young children to seek help.
- An effective advisory and counselling service is essential for students.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The monitoring and evaluation of provision should be seen as an integral part of the service.
- Student participation in evaluating their own progress and that of the service as a whole is particularly valuable.
- The curriculum of basic education needs to be negotiated between tutors and students.
- Students should have access to the records that exist concerning their own progress.

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Published January 1987

ISBN 0 906509 82 3

Design: Studio 21

Further copies of this booklet and of the
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